



MY NEPALESE FRIEND

EDUARDO C.GERDING

I met Warrant Officer Second Class (Ret) Sukrim Rai the first time a rainy April afternoon. He came to have lunch at home with his young Nepalese friend Bijay Devkota who settled in Buenos Aires five years ago dedicated to the textile industry.

Sukrim parents were Sergeant Arja Bahadur Rai and his mother Radha. His grandfather Arthaman Rai also served in the Army.

Sukrim married to Padmawati Rai (54) and had a daughter (30) Dilisha who is a medicine doctor and a son Umed (27). The family professes the Kirat religion. They live near Heathrow Airport in the UK.

Sukrim Rai retired from the British Army in 1994 and worked during 9 years for the Sultan of Brunei. From 2004 to 2007 he also served in security in Iraq and worked in Oxford from 2007 to 2009.

One of the things I appreciate is that most people ignore the historical background of the Gurkhas which is not unusual if you think that currently probably only seven Nepalese live in Argentina and there is no consulate either. Argentina has diplomatic relations with Nepal since 1962. Therefore in this article I will try to explain their history and their performance during the Malvinas conflict.

Note:

The Kirat population practices shamanism, but they called " Kirat religion ". The Kirati observe the Kirat Mundhum . Their sacred text is the Mundhum, also known as Kirat Veda. The Kirat worship nature and their ancestors. Their religious practices are animism, shamanism and the belief in their primitive ancestors, Sumnima and Paruhang. Kirat Limbu people believe in a supreme god called Tagera Ningwaphuma, who is also known as the supreme knowledge. Kirat ancestor Yuma Sammang and the god of war Theba Sammang are the second most important deities. Most Kirat Tamang are Buddhist. The Tamang Kirat originally practiced Boinism, or ancestor worship. They live very close to the Tibetans, but converted to Buddhism when this belief spread throughout Tibet being one of the first communities to convert.



Nepal

<http://adventure.nationalgeographic.com/2009/11/nepal/hiking-great-himalaya-trail-text/2>

The Gurkhas have their origin in a population of Rajasthan, in northern India, who migrated to Nepal in the sixteenth century. Their language, gurkhali, belonging to the Indo-European group and similar to hindi, became the common language of Nepal being called Nepali .

Gurkhas are named after the Hindu holy warrior eighth century, Guru Gorkhanath, whose followers founded the dynasty of Gorkha, who founded the Kingdom of Nepal . In 1788 and 1791 the Gurkhas invaded Tibet and plundered the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse. In 1792 Tibet requested aid to China to get rid of the invaders.

From 1814, they tried to expand their territory to the south and collided with the interests of the British East India Company. The Gurkhas are grouped into two castes: the Thâkur / Rajput, who are considered descendants of the original Gurkhas and only accepted to serve in the British army as officers, and Tibeto Mongol Gurkhas who accept begin their careers as privates.

After the independence of India, the Gurkhas thakur / rajput refused to serve in the British army, but the Mongols authorized the Tibeto Mongols to do so.

The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816)

The Anglo-Nepalese War, also known as the Gurkha War occurred between the Kingdom of Nepal and the British East India Company and its allies the Kingdom of Garhwal and Patiala State.

The conflict started in the very same year our country was fighting the Combat of Martín Garcia against the Spanish naval forces.

The main cause of the conflict was economic but it was also a British strategic decision in order not to fight on two fronts. The British had made continuous efforts (first delegation of William Kirkpatrick in 1792) to persuade the Nepalese government to allow them to trade with Tibet through Nepal.

Nepalese did not want to open its territory to Europe as an old Nepalese precept said : ***With the merchant comes the musket and with the Bible comes the bayonet'***.

Major General Sir Robert Rollo Gillespe said: In countries like India feelings are everything. ***When the natives start to lose respect for the English arms, our superiority in other areas will quickly fall into contempt.***

The British invaders had 22,000 men and an unknown number of Indian mercenaries. They had 60 guns in the first year and 17,000 men in the second season.

British commanders were Edward Francis Rawdon (Earl of Moira and Marquis of Hastings), David Ochterlony (native of Massachusetts), Rollo Gillespie, Bennet Marley and John Sullivan Wood.

The number of British casualties was substantial. All this happened in the pre antiseptic medicine so the number of deaths from combat injuries must have been high.

Note:

During the American Revolutionary War, Rawdon (Lord Moira) served in the battles of Bunker Hill, Brooklyn, White Plains, Camden and Monmouth and took part in the attacks to Forts Washington and Clinton and the site of Charleston.

Nepalese defenders had 14,000 men. Nepalese commanders were Girvan Yuddha, Bikram Shah, Bhimsen Thapa, Amar Singh, Ranjor Singh Thapa Bhatki, Balbhadra Kunwar.

There were two campaigns. The commander of British forces was Lord Moira (60 years). The four divisions were mainly composed of Indian sepoy. Ochterlony David's army was the only division without any British battalion.



Battle of Nalapani-31 October 1814

<http://www.asiaobserver.org/on-31-october-in-indian-and-south-asian-history>

The Battle of Nalapani (near Dehradun) was the first battle of the Anglo Nepalese War. Fort Nalapani was besieged for a month by the British. The fort was defended by the Nepalese Captain Kunwar Balbhadra. The attacking British forces were led by Major General Rollo Gillespie. The latter fell dead on the first day and Balbhadra Kunwar's 600 men resisted the attack of more than 3,000 British.

The former had 69 dead and 671 wounded and the later 90 dead Nepalis and 440 wounded. **In Nalapani the Gurkhas' fame as excellent warriors was coined.**



Nepalese Captain Balbhadra Kunwar

http://america.pink/balbhadra-kunwar_554608.html

The British soldier-poet, John Ship, wrote about the Gurkhas:

*"I never saw more steadinesses Or bravery exhibited in my life.
Run they would not and of death They seemed to have no fear
Though their comrades were falling Thick around them, as bold
For we were so near to know That every shot of ours told."*

When seeing how Nepalese performed and the British vulnerability the resistance against British rule of the Maratha Confederacy in central India was increased.

The British appreciated much the chivalrous behavior of their Nepalese counterpart and provided medical assistance to the prisoners. In turn Nepalis learned to respect British officers and accepted not just their assistance but requiring surgical help as well even when the fighting continued.

In the Battle of Jaithak, in one day the British lost 300 men and during one month Major General Martindale opposed to attack the Nepalese army.

Later the old warrior Bhakti Thapa Nepal led assault after assault. He died but his position did not budge. British impressed by their performance returned his body with full military honors.

Nepalese position in the west end to the British surrendered on May 15, 1815.

There was a second campaign. The war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli. Nepal was an independent country but lost a third of its territory. The Mechi River became the new eastern border and in the western border Mahakali.

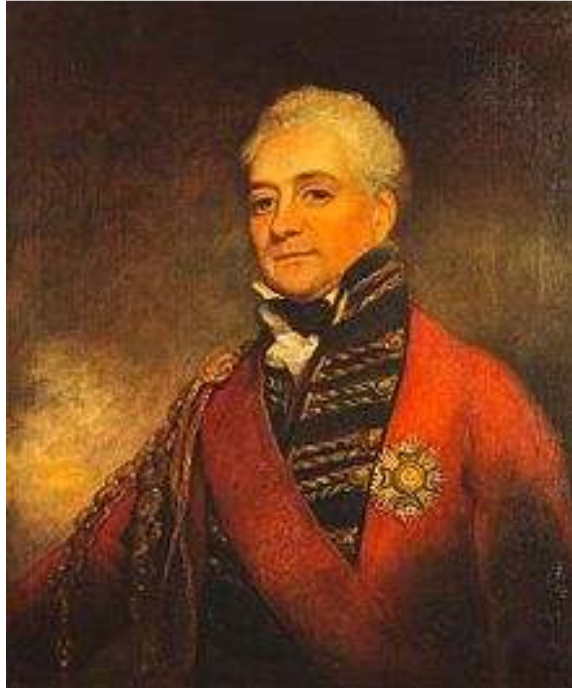
The British did not want to dismember Nepal for fear of antagonizing China. It was the most costly war during the government of Lord Moira.

The recruitment of Gurkhas

This is the beginning of one of the most incredible historical relations between former adversaries. David Ochterlony and political agent William Fraser had quite clear the Nepalese soldiers' potential.

British confidence in the loyalty of the Nepalese was such that in April 1815 a battalion was formed under the command of Lieutenant Ross called the Nasiri regiment (later called King George 1st Regiment Gurkhas Rifles). This regiment under the command of Lieutenant Lawtie combat participated in the action of fort Malaun.

Approximately 5,000 men joined the British service in 1815 but were not actually Gurkhas but Kumaonis, Garhwalis and other tribes of the Himalayas. They were grouped as Gurkhas and came to constitute the bulk of the British force in India.



Sir David Ochterlony, first and last
Baronet of Pitforth, first Baronet of Ochterlony GCB
Knight of the Great Cross of the Order of the Bath
(1758-1825)

1816 painting of Ochterlony by Arthur William Devis

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ochterlony

Note:

David Ochterlony adopted Mughal Persian culture. He had thirteen Indian concubines. His most prominent woman was Bebee Mahruttun ul Nissa Begum Moobaruck a Brahmin dancer of Poona converted to Islam and nicknamed Generallee Begum. She was the mother of his smaller children.

Later, the Sirmoor battalion known as the *2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles*, (he defended Hindu Rao House, a strategic position for three months, losing in action 327 of its 490 men) and the battalion Kumaon known as the *3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles* were formed.

The Gurkhas served as mercenaries of the East India Company during the Pindari War of 1817-1818, in Bhurtbore in 1826, and during the Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845-1846 and 1848-1849).

During the Sepoy Rebellion (1857), the Gurkhas fought alongside the British and became part of the British Indian Army. Between the Sepoy Rebellion and the First World War, the Gurkhas regiments served in Burma, Afghanistan, in the territories of the northeast and northwest India, Malta, during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), in Cyprus, Malaysia, China (during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900) and in Tibet during the expedition of Francis Younghusband in 1903. A hundred thousand Gurkhas participated in the First World War. In Loos, France, the Eighth of Gurkhas fought to the last man. They also participated in action in Givenchy, Neuve-Chapelle and Ypres; in Iraq, Persia, the Suez Canal, Palestine (to face the Turkish advance), Gallipoli and Salonika. One of its detachments was under the command of Lawrence of Arabia. After the First World War, the Gurkhas participated in the Third Afghan War (1919) and in numerous campaigns in the northwest border, especially in Waziristan. Since 1920, the Gurkhas could receive a dispatch of the King of India, which made them British officers. This however was not common until World War II (WWII).

During WWII, the Nepalese crown authorized the recruitment of twenty additional battalions, up to a total of forty. Gurkhas fought in Syria, North Africa, Italy, Greece, Singapore and Burma. After the independence of India in 1947, the fate of the Gurkhas was governed by a tripartite agreement between India, Nepal and the United Kingdom. The main purpose of the agreement was to ensure that the Gurkhas serving the British crown could receive the same treatment and pay scale that had been given to the army of India. This scale, clearly below the levels of the British Army, was partially compensated by the cost of living and accommodation facilities.. Under the above agreement, the Sixth Regiment of Gurkhas joined the Indian Army and four others were transferred to the British Army. Most Gurkhas who had the option to choose between serving in the British army or the Indian army chose the latter.

Note:

‘Protocol 1 of 1977 (not yet ratified by the United Kingdom) Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions’ contains the only internationally agreed definition of a **‘mercenary’**. This definition excludes anyone who *“is a member of the Armed Forces of a party to the conflict”*, thereby effectively excluding Gurkhas in the British and Indian Armies.



The motto of the Gurkhas: *It is better to die than be a coward*. They still they wear their traditional 18 inch curved knife called kukri. During both WW, they suffered 43,000 casualties and won 26 Victoria Crosses - 13 by Nepalis and 13 by their British officers, more than any other regiment. (7). They have strong family relationships. In order to receive a pension they must serve a maximum of 30 years and a minimum of 15. The Brigade of Gurkhas became fully integrated into the British army in 1947. (7). There are some 3,400 Gurkhas in the British Army today. (15,17)

Note:

The Victoria Cross is awarded only for acts of extraordinary value to the enemy which carry an extreme risk of his own life. The bronze material of which it is made comes from cannons captured at Sebastopol during the Crimean War against the Russian Empire (1853-1856). These last can still be seen in the Tower of London. To be granted, the medal must be proposed by witnesses to the heroic act, who know the protagonist and his quest. There is a careful selection of data and details (so strict that only 10% of those proposed for the medal are accepted). Then it must be ratified by the Monarch. The only Gurkha who still lives and holds the distinction is Captain Rambahadur Limbu (74). (12)

Joining the force

The Gurkhas soldiers are selected from young men living in the hills of Nepal. Approximately 28,000 men apply each year for 200 vacancies. To qualify they must be able to do 75 bench jumps in one minute and 70 sit-ups in two minutes. Then they participate in the world's most arduous military selection test, the *doko* - running 5km up a steep track in the foothills of the Himalayas, carrying 25kg of rocks on their back, in less than 55 minutes. (16)



<https://factualforasia.com/tag/kesang-tsetennepal-documentaryal-jazeera-witness-gurkha-schoolgurkhas-in-british-armygurkhas-migrant-workers-from-nepal/>

The social reality of Nepal

This is an aspect that often goes unnoticed and determines the entry of the Nepalese to the British Army.

Most Nepalese live on about £1 a day. A Gurkha soldier earns around £1,000 a month. Little wonder the country's young men will do whatever it takes to join the British army. (7)
Gurkhas may earn more, especially if they are promoted to *naik* (Corporal) or *havildar* (Sergeant). (13)

The Kingdom of Nepal (created on 25 December 1768) of 140,800 Km² (as our province of Mendoza), located in the Himalayas, was the last Hindu kingdom in the world until May 18, 2006, when it was declared a secular state. It is located in the south-central Asia, sharing border with the People's Republic of China (Tibet Autonomous Region) and India.

On 24 December 2007, an agreement between the various political parties in Nepal agreed that the country's monarchy would be abolished by the Constitutional Assembly to meet at 2008. Nepal's current population is 25,676,547 inhabitants (almost half of the whole Argentina).

In Nepal Infant mortality rate: 79 deads./1.000 born alive (Argentina is 13 deads./1000 live births). In most of Asia adolescence does not exist. *You're a child while you can, while life does not require you assume a responsibility as an adult. (13).*
According to the World Bank, Nepal is a **low-income country**. GDP per capita in 2014 was U\$S 701.7 (Argentina was US \$ S 12.509) (2)



Children in Nepal

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/why-we-love-nepal/>



Its mountainous topography makes much of rural Nepal isolated, due to the lack of roads and markets. The difficult access to many rural areas of the country has been an impediment to the efforts of a sustainable and effective development. Agricultural productivity is low, with an increasingly fragmented land and whose fertility is declining. Endemic poverty of rural areas and food insecurity are critical issues, especially among the tribal population living in remote rural areas. (5)

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in Asia, with 82% surviving on less than \$2 a day. Almost 50% of children under five, according to the charity Human Rights Watch, suffer from malnutrition.

Nepalis are not, as a rule, tall people, but the minimum requirements of the recruits - a height of just 5ft 3in, chest measurement of 31 in and weight of just 50kg (7st 8lb) - also take into account the country's poor nutritional standards. (7)

Literacy is only 44%. Employment figures are impossible to calculate thanks to the underdeveloped, agrarian economy, but lack of employment is an important factor in the huge recruiting appeal of the Gurkhas. (7,10)

The population over 65 years is very low . The population is young and more than half of it is under 15 years. It is a developing country and is in the first phase of the demographic transition. (5)

British Psychological action in Malvinas

Braham Chantra Gru said: *"We know that they (Argentines) commented that we used the Kukhuri (combat knife) to cruelly kill our enemies and even cut off their heads with the intention to demoralize them. It seems that this stereotype was well exploited by the British publicity machine, because this came to them at the right time. "* (8)

According to what Major (Ret) Mike Seear Chief of Operations and Training Officer, 1st Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles and author of the book *With the Gurkhas in Malvinas: The 661 Gurkhas in the Falklands were preceded by their fame: murderous bestiality, robotic and mercenary battle actions, anal rapes and their beheading of enemies.* (1,14)

The Gurkhas were involved in logistics and overall strategy, but **never fired a single shot** , recalled Seear. The only night we were close to it was during the early hours of June 14, 1982 when they were surrounded by the Argentine fire. *"It was then that we saw leaflets warning Argentines about the Gurkhas who were going to cut their throats and sexually abuse them. It was a mistake; they killed them first psychologically "* . **(1,11,14)**

They were falsely accused of cutting off the ears of the soldiers of the Regiment 4 (RIU 4) (comprised of soldiers from Corrientes, Chaco, Formosa and Misiones in Two Sisters. **(1)** .No much has been published about the British Psychological action at that time. **.(6)**



Kukri

Gurkhas performance in Malvinas



The Gurkhas were stopped in Tumbledown by artillery fire from the BIM 5's Nacar Company. According to SAMA 82 only one Gurkha died during the conflict while trying to defuse a mine whose name was Budhaaparsad Limbu.

The history of Company Sergeant Major Sukrim Rai in Malvinas



Warrant Officer Second Class Sukrim Rai.
In a Battalion they are colloquially known as 'Company Sergeant Major'.

(Photograph taken by the author)

According to Mike Seear's book *With the Gurkhas in the Falklands* (p176) and Sukrim Rai tale we read the following story: During the Malvinas War at a place called Egg Harbour House south-west of Goose Green, the Gurkha rifleman Budhi Rai saw in the distance three Argentines approaching Lance-Corporal Sukrim Rai's position. The Gurkhas were prepared to shoot at these enemy from their trenches. When the Argentines were at a range of 50 metres, they began to move more slowly because they could not see if there were any other Argentines near the house. Sukrim Rai felt there was no need to shoot them and decided on capturing them instead with his kukri. He told Budhi not to fire unless the Argentines did so first.

The ethics of war embodied in Sukrim included the use of minimal force to achieve the goal.

When the Argentines were at a distance of 20 metres, Sukrim jumped out and confronted them with his kukri.

The Argentines were surprised and promptly surrendered. They were ordered to lie down in order to be searched. Two Argentines obeyed but a third refused.

This was Air Force Lieutenant Jaime Enrique Ugarte (27) who spoke good English. He asked Sukrim not to chop them. Later the Argentines were taken to two separate rooms. They drank water and Ugarte asked Sukrim if he could go and find his wallet which had been left under a pillow in the other room where he had been sleeping. Sukrim picked up the wallet which only contained family photos and gave it to Ugarte. The latter opened it, took out a photo, kissed it, and then prayed for a minute.

Then he asked the Gurkha Lance-Corporal why had they not been killed? Sukrim replied *'Capturing is better than killing. That's why. Because being killed or being captured has the same meaning. The aim of the battle is to win the war. If the enemy has surrendered there is no need to kill whatever, wherever, or whoever. Do or die. It is a soldier's life.'*



April 29th 2016- Brigadier (RE) Jaime Ugarte and Company Sergeant Major Sukrim Rai gather for the first time in the spirit of reconciliation at the author's house. Ugarte said: *If it was not for this gentleman, who overcame the sense of the human condition to the context that we were living at the time, I would not have had the life chances I had, have and will have (God willing).*

(Photograph taken by the author)

Living in UK

In 2005 PM Tony Blair announced that Gurkhas with more than four years' service who retired after 1997 would be allowed to stay in Britain (7)

Retired Gurkhas won the right to live in Britain thanks to the participation of actress Joanna Lumley whose father served with the 6th Gurkha Rifles Regiment. (17)..



Joanna Lamond Lumley OBE, FRGS

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/9373404/Thousands-of-Gurkhas-saved-from-infantry-cull-as-British-battalions-are-axed.html>

One of those who called in London by his peers was Captain Rambahadur Limbu who was awarded the Victoria Cross. (12)

The Gurkha's pension

In 2005 summer, after Gurkhas challenged, under the Human Rights Act, their inequitable treatment compared with a regular British army soldier, the government agreed to increase the Gurkha pension for retirement after 1997 from £95 to at least £450 a month, including a state pension. (7)

In 2007, those who had retired before 1997 - today veterans - made an act of reparation, returning their war medals, due to their low pensions compared to their British peers and the right to remain in the country to which they served . The medals were returned in a box to Prime Minister Gordon Brown in the hands of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party and the main organizer of this march.

Through a loudspeaker, one of them expressed his "*sadness and concern*" over having to return the medals, although he hoped that this act "*will serve as a*" *wake-up call from British Prime Minister*. .
(8)



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-539428/Betrayal-Gurkhas-Soldiers-denied-right-live-hand-medals-back.html>

In that same year, they won a partial victory when pension rules were changed to give serving Gurkha soldiers equal pension rights with other service personnel in the UK. (17)



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-539428/Betrayal-Gurkhas-Soldiers-denied-right-live-hand-medals-back.html>

In 2010 the British Gurkha Welfare Society said about 25,000 men who had retired before 1 July 1997 were denied the opportunity to transfer into UK armed forces pension schemes. It said the government had acted unlawfully by paying them a third of the income of UK-based soldiers, and vowed to fight on.

A High Court test case in January 2010 ruled in favour of the Ministry of Defence, which argued the pension cut-off date was "*justified and proportionate*". That decision has since been challenged by the Gurkhas, who have taken their battle to the Court of Appeal. (4)

The Headquarters of the Brigade of Gurkhas is located at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. The two battalions of the Royal Fusiliers Gurkhas are formed as light infantry and armored vehicles lack. The first battalion of Gurkhas Royal Fusiliers is in the British garrison of Brunei. The second battalion of Royal Gurkhas Rifles is in the Army Camp Shorncliffe near Folkestone in Kent as part of, the 16th Brigade Assault and ready to be deployed in Europe and Africa.

I'll end the paper with the following words:

If there was a minute's silence for every one of the 23,000 Gurkha casualties from World War II, the nation would have to fall quiet for a full fortnight. (16)



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https://www.google.com.ar/search?q=nepal+pictures+national+geographic&biw=1680&bih=925&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=oahUKEwjhn_TT1LnMAhVEfZAKHeomAC8Q7AkILA#imgrc=tji2txrly8PQqM%3A

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